

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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## DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

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January 26, 2009

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.  
Director of Mental Health

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "M. Southard", is written over the printed name and title of Marvin J. Southard.

SUBJECT: **OUTCOMES OF HOMELESS CALWORKS FAMILIES PROJECT**

This is to provide you with an update on the California Institute of Mental Health (CIMH) research on the Homeless CalWORKs Families Project (HCFP) in Los Angeles County.

This study is being prepared for distribution and will be also posted on the CIMH web site: [www.cimh.org/calworks](http://www.cimh.org/calworks).

### **Background**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established an interagency HCFP to address the needs of CalWORKs eligible homeless families in which a parent has mental health problems. The attached outcomes study the third evaluation of the program conducted by CIMH under contract with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.

The HCFP represents interagency collaboration between the Departments of Mental Health and Public Social Services and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority with overall administrative direction for the project provided by the Department of Public Social Services. Approximately 400 CalWORKs families are served each year in six program sites in Los Angeles County.

### **Major findings contained in the report:**

- ☐ More than 85% of participants interviewed in this study were very satisfied with the program.
- ☐ At follow-up between 48% and 68% (depending on source of information) lived in long-term housing that they rented. Roughly half of the families in rental housing made use of a housing voucher. Those not in long-term rental housing were predominantly in transitional shelters, or living with family or friends.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"*

- Follow-up data on participants who received a Section 8 voucher through the program in 2005-2006 showed that 90% were able to obtain a lease and have maintained their housing. "The HCFP is demonstrably successful in helping families find temporary shelter initially and more permanent housing over the long term."
- At the final assessment, about 20% were in school, training or working as a volunteer, and 13% were working full-time. Overall 53% were working or had some work-related activity.
- Participants made many other gains, including substantial improvement in mental health status and lesser improvements in dealing with substance abuse and domestic violence.

**Recommendation of the CIMH evaluators:**

**Recommendation 1**

It is critically important for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the agencies involved in the HCFP to take all necessary actions in order to retain the existing Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) vouchers and obtain 200 more for the next year.

**Recommendation 2**

The Steering Committee to establish the goal to obtain permanent housing within 120 days of participant's entry into the program and to provide HCFP services in or near the shelters where participants live.

**Recommendation 3**

The HCFP should ensure ready availability of assessment and treatment for children with mental health needs at all sites.

**Recommendations 4 and 5**

Each site to have HCFP staff qualified to address many domestic abuse and substance abuse issues as part of the program.

#### Recommendations 6 and 7

The Steering Committee should consider tailoring services to the needs of specific groups by developing separate paths for different subpopulations with somewhat different service constellations and different goals and expectation for each:

- ❑ Individuals with serious functional impairments due to mental health and/or co-occurring problems.
- ❑ Persons whose symptoms are believed to be due to situational stress.

#### Recommendation 8

In the face of a large need for family homeless services, the Steering Committee should consider various options for further defining eligibility to the HCFP.

MJS:CW:DD:ek

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